

1984

RAW Speech at Democratic National Convention

Madam Chairman, Fellow Delegates, Fellow Americans:

Four years ago Ronald Reagan entered the White House as a proud, self-avowed conservative. The media heralded his victory as a victory for conservatism. Yet, in the area of environmental protection, he has betrayed his conservative supporters and our entire nation.

Environmental protection was once called "conservation". It is as old as the republic. Since colonial times, those who truly love America have fiercely guarded the beauty of our land and the national resources on which our very lives depend.

After two decades of progress on environmental issues under both Republican and Democratic presidents, the Reagan Administration has given us four years of wanton and reckless neglect and assault on our air, our coastlines, our rivers, lakes and forests.

Public enemies of the environment #1 and #2, James Watt and Anne Gorsuch, are no longer very visible -- though some of us noticed Ms. Gorsuch slipping in the back door. More mellow characters have taken their roles; but Reagan policy has not changed one bit.

James Watt eagerly invited commercial interests to plunder our coal and oil reserves. James Watt intended to auction off our forests and our wilderness areas. Rita Lavelle arranged sweetheart deals to protect chemical companies. She covered her tracks by destroying government documents. Ms. Gorsuch gutted the Environmental Protection Agency and boldly defied congressional subpoenas.

Ronald Reagan is the only president in American history who has been opposed to acquiring new federal park lands. Since our National Parks System was established by that great Republican president, Theodore Roosevelt, every president has understood the importance of making sure that our Parks System keeps pace with our growing population.

PAST opportunities can not be regained. The FUTURE depends on defeating Ronald Reagan.

As is so beautifully noted in the song "America the Beautiful", the majestic glory of our land is infinitely enhanced by the shining seas that define our continent. Ronald Reagan has been eager to turn our coastlines into commercial oil fields. Only the combined fury of the courts, the public, and coastal states has inhibited a policy which could permanently despoil beaches and contaminate our oceans.

PAST damage done to our coastlines can not be undone. The FUTURE depends on defeating Ronald Reagan.

President Reagan has encouraged profitable commercial strip-mining of our grazing lands, farms and forests. He has handed over coal resources that he was entrusted to conserve to exploiters and speculators.

PAST losses can not be recovered. The FUTURE depends on defeating Ronald Reagan.

President Reagan has virtually destroyed the Environmental Protection Agency. The E.P.A. should control hazardous waste and guarantee the safety and purity of our air and water. Instead, Reagan's E.P.A. has swerved like a drunken driver from one scandal to another.

An astonishing 19 of the original top 20 E.P.A. officials have resigned under a cloud of suspicion or actual indictment on criminal charges.

PAST harm done by corrupt and incompetent E.P.A. officials can not be reversed. The FUTURE depends on defeating Ronald Reagan.

Millions of Americans see whole forests dying before their eyes. They find that once-bountiful lakes and streams have turned into graveyards--their waters poisonous to humans and wildlife alike. The main causes of this devastation are acid rain and toxic waste. Reagan has stubbornly refused to fight the chemical pollutants which cause acid rain. Millions of federal dollars were set aside to clean up the 500 worst hazardous waste dumpsites. Despite the Superfund, only 6 of the 500 sites have been cleaned up. The Reagan Administration defied Congress and the American people in refusing to act.

PAST deaths and illnesses caused by toxic waste can not be corrected. The FUTURE depends on defeating Ronald Reagan.

As a congressman from Los Angeles and as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, nothing has disturbed me more than the constant efforts by the Reagan Administration to destroy the Clean Air Act. Soon the entire world will watch Olympic athletes coughing, choking and collapsing in worst-than-usual Los Angeles smog. Yet, Reagan wants to INCREASE the allowable levels of pollution from cars and industry! For some, air pollution is merely an ugly annoyance. But for infants, the elderly, and those with heart and lung problems, it is a matter of life and death.

There can be no compensation for PAST suffering. The
FUTURE depends on defeating Ronald Reagan.

I have come to file a brief in the highest court of any democratic society: the court of public opinion. At issue is the case of the people of the United States of America versus Ronald Reagan. This is a class action. The plaintiffs include liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, and people from every region. Among the plaintiffs are not only all Americans alive today; but also generations past who left us this beautiful land, and generations yet unborn who have a right to inherit the beautiful America of which we sing.

Who will testify on President Reagan's behalf? Only those who have profited from his misdeeds. The rest of us understand that the FUTURE depends on defeating Ronald Reagan.

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